

MATWATCH

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AN OPEN LETTER TO RIC FLAIR

Mr. Ric Flair
Box 105366
One CNN Center
Atlanta GA 30348-5366

Dear Ric:

You've had big shoulders the last decade. You've not been the most marketed celebrity in your field. But you've been the standard by which discerning fans judge the word "wrestling." Your shoulders have weathered the changing winds of the NWA from dominant cooperative to a synonym for Jim Crockett Promotions to its infancy as one of 200 subsidiaries of Turner Broadcasting System. Despite what a former colleague once said of himself, you ARE the NWA.

You now have a new job in the NWA. No small task. One, no doubt, you can handle but one which takes adjustment. Most feel you were the heir apparent to work as JCP's booker in 1984 before Virgil Runnels was hired. We won't review tired history.

Last year, a fledgling publication called MATWATCH endorsed you as NWA booker when Mr. Turner bought the company. Even when others said it was too burdensome for a world champ riding the Concorde to the age of 40.

Ric, I still like the idea. As creative as your matches and finishes are, you doubtless have the mind to develop exciting programs. But let's review something you already know is shockingly true. It's not like the pre-1985 days when booking meant two TV shows a week and that 3-state circuit of reliable towns with guys who had no pressures (other than yourself) of reaching a national following.

The boss is named Jim but his last name is not Crockett. Paychecks now come at an office run by a fellow named Ted. The NWA is not number one at the gate any more, though it clings to a loyal hardcore following, particularly of fans over the age of 30.

Heavens, when you look at the challenges, I



haven't a clue why you or anyone else wants this job. There's the matter of attracting kids, something the NWA hasn't done well in two years. Kids apparently love characters over competition, comic books over workrates. Vince McMahon draws three million more children 2-11 to his weekly TV shows than the NWA. That figure alone is the difference in the two alliances' TV ratings.

There's the business of formatting six first-run hours of weekly TV which have to be exciting to draw audiences who will buy arena tickets. Not even Johnny Carson logs that much weekly time. Until arenas fill across the USA, "maintenance shows" won't help.

There's the category of talent. You have quality in the NWA: veterans, hot young ones and a few ---painful as it is---who may be at the stage of Mickey Mantle at age 36. It's a case of knowing who to push when, listening to fans, keeping ego and friendship out of personnel decisions, listening to personal problems: a guy wanting a day off, a guy with a new angle idea, a guy upset about his push, a guy who no-shows---a myriad of things which relate in no way to the product in the ring at 8 every night. But problems you, nonetheless, must handle.

Finally, there's you. You're still The Franchise, the MFP in the Colgate. But the most important thing is for you to be at the pinnacle of your ring game. Potentially, this could be the hottest run for your career and a fool isn't needed to remind you of the mental strain of being a 1990s booker. Use the other good creative minds you have to ease that load.

You've seen how one past booker would sacrifice other careers to continue elevating himself. He now makes a living sticking his arm in toilets. If you succeed where he eventually burned out, you will build a dynamic future career for the days after you walk the aisle a final time.

Ric, you have nothing left to prove to those of

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your fans who already feel you've written your Hall of Fame chapter. Perhaps you feel you have another chapter to create or others to whom something is left to prove in a different avenue. Whatever the reason, it's a big job. But you're a big guy and you know what you're getting into. Here's hoping for success.

*Steve
Beverly*

STEVE BEVERLY
EDITOR/PUBLISHER
MATWATCH

PINFALL PROFILE

LONDON - After driving 1400 miles through England and Scotland, it's nice to be on our way toward home. But we wanted to share some things with you to show you're never far away from the ring:

---We saw no wrestling here as we couldn't find any. But across from our rental car center, in Cambridge, was a building called THE WRESTLERS. It's run by Charles Wells and there, young men train and live for six months in hopes of a ring career.

Wells is somewhat the Larry Sharpe of Cambridge and every fortnight, his students put on exhibitions at 7:30 Fridays. All except August because much of the country is "on holiday."

---Our American friends stationed in Newmarket, England, pick up Armed Forces television. AFRTS carries WWF SUPERSTARS at 4 p.m. Saturdays and at least periodically carries SNME in rotation with SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE at 9 p.m. Saturdays.

---The disclaimers for WWF in AFRTS TV GUIDE are quite strong. After the listing, the guide warns of "glamorized violence, may include racial slurs/stereotyping." Not even the frank L.A. LAW drew that kind of caveat.

---Most of the shows are at least a year old. AFRTS showed SUMMER SLAM '88 last Sunday at 1:30 for the first time. The SUPERSTARS shows are still featuring The Iron Sheik and British Bulldogs.

---Satellite TV is just launching in Britain but their dishes are small enough to stick outside a window and a full sys-

tem, including descrambler for movie channels, can be had for 350 pounds, or \$560 in U.S. money. But pay-per-view is still a thing of the future.

---SUPERSTARS gets two plays a day on Rupert Murdoch's SKY ONE channel on Saturdays and SCREENSPORT, another satellite service to Europe, offers AWA five nights a week (we even saw some with Paul E. & the original Midnights). So, the NWA has some catching up to do on an international basis.

---No more British wrestling on the BBC or ITV. It ended about a year ago after a 30-year run but compared to what the Brits get from America on cable and satellite, it seemed pale and the ratings died.

---More talk surfaced with some we met of a future WWF pay-per-view at Wembley Stadium and the Londoners are hoping for it as they believe it would be an early sellout.

---The English are very familiar with Hogan and the WWF stars and they know Ric Flair. But the rest of the NWA is mostly a blank to them except for one name: "Ted Toohnooh, Ted Toohnooh." All it took was my CNN sweatshirt and they knew. The CNN International feed is very popular here.

---Unless you take out an international subscription in England, you find no printed wrestling material. None of the magazines are on the stands.

---I do understand now why the PAL transmission system is considered superior to the American NTSC. If you're confused, it's basically the number of lines which make up the picture you see and I don't think I saw a poor quality picture on even the worst sets.

---I do believe that as the satellite gains more acceptance in this nation, the barriers will increasingly break down to international access for the U.S. wrestling organizations. But all are going to have to aggressively market that prospect and the time to prepare is now.

(SPECIAL NOTE: Because of our late return, we will resume our regular THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES section in next week's MATWATCH, which will be a day late for SUMMER SLAM.)

SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWER-SLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor.

TV TEMPO

(CWA) - BATTLE ROYAL FINAL: Ricky Morton wins over Doug Gilbert, Mark Starr, Chris Champion. Champion & Starr take a chain to Morton before Robert Gibson saves. Blackbirds d. Scott Hall/Bobby Shannon; 6-MAN: Black Bart/Tony Anthony/Master of Pain d. Rod Naper/Chris Frazier/Freezer Thompson; Freddy/Dustin Rhodes d. Rough & Ready; Rhodes/Plowboy Frazier draw vs. Gilbert/Gary Albright. DRAW.

(AWA) - Akio Sato d. T.C. Carter; Scott Norton d. Red Tyler; Destruction Crew d. Todd Becker/Jimmy Magnum; AWA WORLD TITLE: Sgt. Slaughter d. Larry Zbyszko but Gary DeRusha reverses decision because Slaughter clotheslined DeRusha after a duck by Larry Z. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(SCW) - Ga. Power d. Invader/Kevin Dillinger; David Sammartino d. Steve Bennett; Mr. Wrestling II d. Chance Myers; Rocky King d. Chuck McCall; Bullet/Brad Armstrong win DQ over Mr. Atlanta/Mike Golden. RESTHOLD.

(ACW) - Replay of complete show from May 15. No rating offered.

(PORTLAND) - Coconut Willie no decision vs. Cowboy Lang when Jonathan Boyd, late for the opener, orders both midgets out; LOSER LEAVE PORTLAND: Scotty the Body/Grappler d. Southern Rockers 2-3 falls to send Scott Peterson packing; Carl Stiles wins DQ over Nord the Barbarian when Grappler interferes but Bill Francis saves and 4-way brawl erupts; Beetlejuice/Matman vs. Rip Oliver/Al Madril dog collar match in progress as show ends. ANGLE: Boyd attacks Willie, the second time after Willie bites Boyd on rear but Rex King saves to set up mixed match next week. POWERSLAM.

(WCCW) - BATTLE FOR THE PROMOTION: Eric Embry d. P.Y. Chu'i in cage match to end World Class era and change name to USWA; J.J. Funk d. Dog of War; Kerry Von Erich vs. Al Perez double countout; Chris Adams vs. Gary Young no decision when match goes to floor and Cactus Jack Manson, Skandor Akbar interfere. POWERSLAM.

(CWF) - Wendell Cooley d. Lou Fabiano; Dennis Condrey d. Todd Morton; Tom Prichard d. Keith Hart but Condrey runs in and DDTs Prichard twice on chair (Tom juices big); VIDEO: Jeff Jarrett. REPLAY: Jerry Stubbs/S. Boys brawl w. Stud Stable. Beauty & the

Beast win DQ over Adrian & Linda Street when Adrian chairs B&B after Terry Garvin powerslams and elbows Linda; Stubbs/S. Boys d. RPM Davis/Bill Tabb/Rock Hart. VIDEO: Kerry Von Erich. DRAW...Prichard does stretcher job.

(WWF/USA) - 3-HOUR SUMMER SLAM PREVIEW: Including past matches: Savage vs. Beefcake, Bravo vs. Snuka, Demolition vs. Tully & Arn, Hart Foundation vs. Powers of Pain, Anabolic Warrior vs. Haku. POWERSLAM...a 3-hour commercial but a well-done one with Piper & Heenan feuding.

(WWF/SYND.) - [SUPERSTARS]: Rougeaus d. Chuck Williams/Paul Mandan; Hillbilly Jim d. Chris Duffy; Curt Hennig d. Mark Reagan; Harts d. Mitch Casey/Bill Spector; Jim Duggan d. Allen Kinsey; Barry Widomaker d. Gary Wolf; REPLAY: Anabolic-Haku; BRO. LUV w. Andre/Twin Towers. BOMB-PLUS.

[SPOTLIGHT]: Harts d. Mike Scarberry/Ken Arnold; REPLAY: Snuka d. Greg Valentine (SNME) & Jack Tunney suspension of Ronnie Garvin as ref; Bravo d. Brian Johnson; Haku d. Tony Durante; Powers of Pain d. Young Stallions; FEATURE: Mean Gene w. Warrior; Rick Martel d. Dale Wolfe. RESTHOLD.

[CHALLENGE]: Snuka d. Barry Horowitz; Bad News Brown d. Dave Wagner; Greg Valentine d. Brian Johnson; Foghorn Leghorn d. Mitch Casey; Demolition d. Boris Zhukov/Dusty Woods. BOMB-PLUS.

(NWA/TBS) - [WCW]: Unintended rerun of July 29 show (see TUBE TALK). No rating offered. [POWER HOUR]: Sting d. Ron Simmons; Ric Flair d. Cuban Assassin (Dave "Top Gun" Sierra); Lex Luger d. Tommy Rich w. leg on ropes; WNN: Gordon Solie discusses bigger men in NWA Top 10. FUNK'S GRILL: Terry almost cuts Norman's hair but instead offers to give Brian Pillman a Road Warrior haircut next week. DRAW.

(NWA/SYND.) - [NWA PRO]: Sting d. Frogman Le Blanc; Terry Funk d. Scott Hall w. help from Gary Hart. After, Hall slams Funk over top but Funk hits Hall w. branding iron; Freebirds d. Mike Justice/Bob Emory; Midnight Express d. Ron Simmons/Trent Knight; BEST-OF-3 FINAL (NO DQ): Mike Rotunda d. Steve Williams when Teddy Long runs in & Mike catches Doc from behind. REPLAY: N.Z. Militia injure Shane Douglas; PEDICINO'S NOSE: Joe reviews Flair-Funk rivalry. DRAW. [WORLD WIDE]: Road Warriors d. Mike Hernandez/LeBlanc; Great Muta d. Emory; Williams d. Bounty Hunter; Militia d. Justice/George South; NWA WORLD TAG TITLE: Steiners d. Freebirds by DQ when Terry Gordy runs in; Rich d. Luger by DQ when Funk breaks up Thesz press w. branding iron.

INES OF THE WEEK - 1. Terry Funk, NWA: "I want you to spit out your vitamins and wear your underwear for 30 days. Then you might grow up to be like me." 2. Gene Okerlund, WWF: "How big are they (Andre/Towers)? I went to a movie with them and got in for half-price." 3. Gary Young, WCCW: "Solidarity ain't my favorite word but I don't worry about it 'cause I know how to spell it." 4. Roddy Piper, PTW: "Bobby, you're as exciting as watching the Waltons sort cranberries." 5. Piper, WWF: "Bobby, if I gave you a dollar for every second you could last with me, you couldn't buy a soda at McDonalds." 6. Jim Cornette, TBS, to Jim Ross: "There's an abominable snowman in Tibet who says you're the father of her love child." 7. Dennis Condrey, CWF: "Wendell Cooley, you're gonna die by the sewer because I'm gonna make you commit sewerside." 8. Skandor Akbar & Marc Lowrance, WCCW: (SA) "I'll give you severance pay like I did Dusek....from now on you're taking orders from me." (ML) "I thought I was fired." 9. Lex Luger, NWA: "Tommy Rich: a man who has not wrestled for years, who abandoned our sport." 10. Jesse Ventura, WWF: "One slap like Mr. Perfect's would make your toupee fly off, McMahon." 11. Cornette, TBS: "I walked in & said, 'Jim Herd, take off that coonskin cap.' Unfortunately, it was his hair." 12. Larry Zbyszko, AWA: "My left hand's made out of Uranium-235. My right hand's made out of plutonium." 13. Ross & Luger, NWA: (JR) "You're talking about a former world champion (Rich)." (LL) "That & 50¢ will buy him a cup of coffee." 14. Samuel Kent, SCW: "Some people say I don't have any friends." 15. Don Coss & Scotty the Body, Portland: (DC) "Get the police! This guy (Nord) is crazy!" (STB) "He's a nice guy. You've just gotta know him." 16. Piper, & Heenan, PTW: (BH) "A tie can be bought for 5 or 6 bucks." (RP) "So can you." 17. Charlie Platt, CWF: "Dennis Condrey, you're going to be the target practice of everybody in the CWF." 18. Lance Russell, NWA, on Funk: "There's a place for him but I'm not sure they could fit him in." 19. Lowrance, WCCW: "I don't think I've ever seen the executive material (Max Andrews) so wound up." 20. Cornette, inspecting Ross' face with Sherlock Holmes magnifier: "You need Clearasil."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Luger, NWA: "For him (Rich) to be considered in the Top 10 is a mockery of the NWA." 2. Vince McMahon, WWF: "The Widowmaker has more wrestling talent than most of the gifted athletes in the WWF."

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Ventura, WWF, on Hillbilly Jim: "Is it true he used to practice headlocks on hogs?" 2. Piper, WWF: "What is Heenan doing now? Waiting on tables at Tavern on the Green in Central Park?"

BEST NICKNAMES - 1. "Egg Plant" for Frank Dusek (by Akbar). 2. "Swindle Cooley" for Wendell (by Dennis Condrey).

BEST PICTURES - 1. Young-Adams brawl, WCCW. 2. Scott Hall slamming Funk's arm into rail, NWA. 3. Cornette in Sherlock Holmes gear, TBS. 4. Slaughter clotheslining DeRusha, AWA.

BLOOPER AWARDS - 1. TBS, for showing repeat WCW tape by mistake. 2. WCCW, for running same Gary Young interview twice.

DREADED GLITCH - NWA, for New Zealand MALITIA super on WORLD WIDE.

BOO AWARD - TBS, for airing wrong WCW which had the phone lines jamming.

TUBE TALK

No outburst of emotion in the year & 2 months of MATWATCH as when my phone line lit

up during the WCW rerun Saturday. Most of you asked how it can happen. As an ex-TV man, I can tell you it can, usually by computer error or by human error at smaller stations. But it was virtually inexcusable for it to happen on the #1 cable network and I expect some disciplinary action, possibly even dismissal of the guilty party. I was told it was a TBS control room error and it will be difficult to correct because next week's is a 2-hour show and was to feature the nighttime date of Rick Steiner & Robin Green to follow up on the daytime date you didn't see Saturday. At press time, the solution was not settled....For the record, I've watched TV wrestling from Atlanta for 24 years and never saw that kind of mistake....FCW was still running an Orlando show Sunday so reports of its demise may be premature....WCCW did a first-rate job of building the Embry-Chu'i battle for the USWA/World Class name & the Akbar-Young-Manson-Adams brawl was only marred by pulling out of it too soon....Give WWW a POWERSLAM rating but not even Ross could generate heat for Rich-Luger. That crowd simply didn't have it for Tommy....Randall Brown, a Phil Hickerson lookalike, is Boni Blackstone's new co-host on WVEU SUPERSTARS in Atlanta....Reports are Ricky Steamboat may do an ICW taping with brother Vic but I don't buy it....Pat Tanaka is Portland's third Matman....Tom Prichard's CWF turn well-done but Tom's simply turned too much, too often....Pipeline tells me Stampede may turn up on national cable soon but don't hold your breath. FSB.

COMINGS & GOINGS

NEW OLD GUYS: Some of this may be old hat by the time you read it but Dick Slater is in the NWA as a heel and already involved in an angle at last week's tapings with Ric Flair. Nikita Koloff will reportedly be back in November or December. Flair reportedly wants to bring in others.

OVER THE HUMP: Oliver Humperdink is in and according to sources outside the NWA, will manage the SST. Paul E. Dangerously will concentrate on his TV work but where this leaves him at the arenas is a ???.

EDGE OF NIGHT?: Ollie's move may or may not signal something I've had two reports on (one reliable and one not so) since my return: that Florida has already or will fold by Labor Day. I haven't been able to contact Wayne Coulter but I do know some prospective wrestlers were told not to come to Tampa because the promotion was folding. More next week.

WAVE THE FLAG: Other than new banners, very little has changed in the USWA since the Eric Embry victory over P.Y. Chu'i ending the name World Class. And some fans are confused because they thought Embry's win would bring an end to the Akbar dynasty.

DUSEK'S BACK: Frank Dusek was expected back on USWA TV Saturday night in Dallas but that wasn't for certain at press time. Marc Lowrance taking to wearing sport shirts instead of the old blazer-and-tie.

SYNDIE NEWS: NWA picked up some significant new markets and upgrades in the past 2 weeks: WTTO in Birmingham, Ala.; WLVI in Boston; WNAC in Providence; the Fox affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth; and more announcements, I'm told, are coming.

A&P BOYS: My friends Apter & Peters (of PWI fame) attended the opening ROLLERGAMES tapings Aug. 11-12 in L.A. They'll be handling publication of the new ROLLERGAMES magazine due out Oct. 17.

NO HOLDS: The WWF film is still playing in about 100 theatres and grossed approximately \$16 million. New Line Cinema credits the NO HOLDS revenue with a profit of 2 cents per share during the second quarter.

BIG PAY: The L.A. TIMES CALENDAR Magazine offered an extensive look at pay-per-view. WM5 was listed as grossing \$22.8 million but that is about the fifth different figure I have read. But Jeff Kaye accurately por-

trayed the fact that "Sugar Ray Leonard, Hulk Hogan and their combative brethren are the carrots that have kept PPV moving forward." Paul Kagan Associates, a media research firm, estimates PPV will reach a universe of 19.2 million homes in 1992 and 46.7 million by 1997. That latter figure would mark 52% of the current USA television universe and it is that point at which I believe wrestling would become totally driven by pay visa vis arena shows.

SYNDIE RATINGS: We'll resume our CABLE RATINGS next week and try to catch you up on the weeks we've been away but for the week in syndication ending July 30, WWF pulled a 9.2 on 257 stations and NWA a 6.1 on 151. That is the top WWF number since WRESTLEMANIA and the highest NWA number in a non-CLASH week this year.

KENT'S CORNER: SCW's Sir Samuel Kent in an angle on Atlanta's SUPERSTARS local show where he proposed to have Oprah Winfrey and several other celebrities at a party at his home and the bit was well-built to a climax around 11 o'clock where Kent was exposed.

TRYOUT TIME: Our friend, Chris Cruise, a former CNN HEADLINE NEWS anchor, had a tryout with the NWA for the WORLD WIDE show in Charleston, W. Va., 10 days ago. Chris has a tremendous voice and we'll cross our fingers.

GARY AND TONY ARE IN: Gary Cappetta, Mr. Class of ring announcers, has been hired on a permanent basis by the NWA for TV and to share a road rotation with a new find, Tony Gillam, of Fayetteville NC. Gary & Tony will alternate on WORLD WIDE and NWA PRO and you'll be seeing either or both in your local arenas after Sept. 1.

NETWORKING: WWF has lost its Saturday night CHALLENGE slot in Montgomery AL but still has a strong SUPERSTARS morning slot on David Woods' WCOV. Speaking of David, he's added ROLLERGAMES (and, I believe AMERICAN GLADIATORS) to go with his four weekly ring hours, including his own CWF. The ROLLERGAMES promos are extra slick!

FALL TIME: Flair, you've not doubt seen, is part of the T-B-YES fall campaign for Turner. He's in the same promo with Jimmie Walker, whose old GOOD TIMES show joins the SuperStation in September.

CLASH CHANGE: By the way, CLASH VIII has been switched to Tuesday, Sept. 12 at 8:05 ET with Funk/Muta vs. Flair/Sting on top. The change was due to a TBS schedule conflict. Also, the October PPV from Philly is now on Saturday night, Oct. 28, from 7-10 p.m. (ET).

COMINGS & GOINGS (Continued from Page 5)

What will interest me is how this PPV performs as the first-ever Saturday night effort when a lot of high school and college football will still be played live and on the tube and on a night when Vince McMahon has the Spectrum likewise booked for a loaded show. This may be more of an ULTIMATE GAMBLE than the original plan to go head-on with a PPV vs. WRESTLEMANIA. The marketing will be crucial almost from the time the CLASH ends.

SUMMER SLAM: STEVE'S FORECAST

I'll come right out and say, on paper, the Hart Foundation vs. Tully & Arn match should be the best on this card by far, though if Terry Taylor isn't made to peck and crow too much, his match with Curt Hennig could rival the tag affair.

I'll peg the Anderson-Blanchard combo to win, likely under controversial circumstances, and Hennig will probably take Taylor, though I see no real significance in the match.

There is no way on earth Dusty Rhodes will not win over Honky Tonk Man, in that too much has been invested in Dusty's early buildup and Wayne Farris is obviously in a declining mode within Titan quarters.

If the Anabolic Warrior does not win the Intercontinental title back, it will be a bigger surprise than TOUR OF DUTY being renewed for a third season.

Hercules-Valentine is a diddle match that looks like one of these double DQ or countout finishes, though if there's a pinfall, it will be Greg to get it.

Rougeaus-Martel vs. Santana-Rockers has the makings of a quality affair, yet I remember how bad the Rougeaus looked against the Sheepwackers at WM5. I expect a 6-8 minute match here with the Rockers' team going over to give them a boost toward a WM5 showdown with Tully & Arn.

I have to believe the Twin Towers & Andre

will go over the Demolition-Duggan trio because the Towers are owed a big win for taking the fall for Hogan at THE MAIN EVENT in February. But this is one of those matches where one may smell a turn on the heel team. However, it would have to be Akeem or Andre, since Bubba has to follow up his angle with Dusty.

The big one, which alone is selling this show, has to walk a tenuous line between getting Hogan & Zeus closer to a one-on-one showdown and sending the fans home happy, a McMahon trademark. So, I figure on Beefcake taking the loss and then a Hogan-Zeus confrontation ending with a major angle to buildup the one-on-one.

Buy-rates? Last year's pulled about a 4.8% despite major claims of it being the biggest seller of all-time with a 10.3% purchase. I would peg on a 4-4.5%, once all the hype is sorted through. If WRESTLEMANIA itself can only pull a 6, a 25% dropoff for a summer show is not unrealistic. Still, with the kind of money that makes, the hype doesn't matter.

I REMEMBER (Coming Weeks): Aug. 28, Tarzan Tyler vs. Bronco Kelly. Sept. 4, The Torres Brothers vs. El Mongol & Tarzan Tyler. Sept. 11, The Pro & Mario Galento vs. The Outlaw & Seiji Sakaguchi.

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